

# Department of Human Services

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## Articles in Today's Clips Tuesday, November 20, 2007

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Child Abuse/Neglect/Protection	2-4
Juvenile Justice	5
Adult Foster Care	6-7
Health Care	8
Food Assistance	9
Homelessness	10-11
Unemployment	12
Charities	13-15
State Budget	16-17

\*Important story at this spot



## Expert: Girl's shooting shows need for vigilance

Tuesday, November 20, 2007

By Theresa D. McClellan

The Grand Rapids Press

MARNE -- Stephen Larson prided himself on his gun safety and firearms training. But today, friends say the Marne man is devastated as his 6-year-old granddaughter recovers after she was shot in his home by his 8-year-old grandson.

Zara Rose Haight was in critical condition at DeVos Children's Hospital after the weekend shooting, which police said was accidental.

The girl and her brother, who live in Allegan, were visiting their grandparents' home at 2036 Hayes St. when the shooting occurred in the grandfather's bedroom, Ottawa County sheriff's Lt. Mark Bennett said.

Larson, 54, was outdoors at the time of the shooting.

"He was alerted by actions by the 8-year-old," Bennett said.

The grandfather went inside to find his granddaughter, who had been shot once in the abdomen. The girl's mother and maternal grandmother were in the home at the time, but it is unclear whether they heard the shot.

The mother of the children, Elizabeth Kizer, told police her son and daughter are autistic. Bennett said he did not know whether that played a role in the accident.

"It's tough to know what goes through the mind of an 8-year-old and, coupled with the fact we're told he may have a condition, we don't know how he's doing," the lieutenant said.

The boy's name has not been released.

The family could not be reached for comment.

Bennett said the state's Children's Protective Services was notified, which is routine. He expects to send a report to the Ottawa County Prosecutor's Office by next week. He does not expect anyone will be charged.

"The grandfather has been very cooperative," Bennett said of Larson, a member of the Great Lakes Shooting Sports Association and a chief instructor of firearms, according to the group's Web site. As an instructor, Larson is certified by the National Rifle Association.

"The fact that it happened to an instructor, the fact that a child is laying in the hospital fighting for her life, it's very sad, and I hope it would make others want even more to concentrate on gun safety," said Lon Ferguson, a gun safety and firearms instructor who has worked with Larson.

Authorities still were talking with relatives to learn where the gun used in the shooting was located in Larson's home. Bennett said there are a number of guns in the Wright Township home. Larson is registered with the county to carry a concealed weapon.

"I think it illustrates it can really happen to anyone. You have to be vigilant when firearms are in the home," Bennett said.

One of Larson's neighbors, Marian Szudera, said she brought food to the family after the accident.

"I hurt for him," she said of Larson. "Steve just looks devastated."

**Send e-mail to the author: [tmcclellan@grpress.com](mailto:tmcclellan@grpress.com)**

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## Sex case at day care site

Tuesday, November 20, 2007

PLAINFIELD TOWNSHIP -- Kent County Sheriff's officials are investigating a criminal sexual conduct complaint at a private home licensed as the My Buddy Day Care, 4004 Ambrose Ave. NE. The alleged suspect and victim are residents of the home, and police say there is no information any of the day care children were harmed. The suspect was arrested and held at the Kent County Jail and was to be arraigned today.

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# Teens arrested in break-ins

Tuesday, November 20, 2007

BY REX HALL JR.

[rhall@kalamazoogazette.com](mailto:rhall@kalamazoogazette.com)

388-7784

KALAMAZOO -- Two teenagers are suspected of breaking into neighboring homes on the city's southwest side Monday morning and making off with a computer, cameras, money and jewelry, police said.

The rear sliding door to one of the homes was smashed out, and Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety officers found evidence of forced entry into a residence next door after responding to a burglary alarm in the 2700 block of Lake Chevy Chase Drive at about 10 a.m., a news release said.

A citizen and a detective noticed two suspicious people nearby. The young men fled on foot into a wooded area as an officer approached them in the 2800 block of Bronson Boulevard, the news release said.

Police said a 16-year-old and a 17-year-old were found hiding under bushes behind a residence in the 1400 block of Whites Road with items taken from the houses on Lake Chevy Chase Drive. Other items missing from the two homes also were found in the wooded area, the news release said.

The suspects, whose names were not released, were arrested on charges of home invasion and resisting police. The 16-year-old was taken to the Kalamazoo County Juvenile Home and the 17-year-old to the Kalamazoo County Jail.

Police said no residents were home at the time of the break-ins.

# Number of adult foster care homes raises concerns

Police Chief Agay says calls from homes are costly, time-consuming

By DEBRA HAIGHT  
H-P Correspondent

November 19, 2007

BERRIEN SPRINGS — Combined, Berrien Springs and Oronoko Township lead all Berrien County communities in the number of licensed adult foster care homes.

That's not counting the unknown number of unlicensed adult foster care homes in the two communities. Regardless of how they're counted, the homes are a growing concern for residents and local officials.

"Whether we handle it through zoning or a rental ordinance, it's something we need to be aware of," Chief Milton Agay of the Berrien Springs Oronoko Township Police Department told the township police committee last week. "I know there will be no quick easy fix. ... It's like opening a can of worms." He said community members have filed complaints about strange behavior from residents of licensed and unlicensed homes. He said his department gets calls from homes' operators when a resident wanders off or gets into disputes with another resident or the care provider.

Agay said the calls can be costly and time consuming because officers have to deal with situations where no crime has been committed but a person may have to be admitted to a hospital for psychiatric or medical help.

The unknown number of homes and residents presents problems for disaster preparedness.

"With the unlicensed homes, we don't know where they are or what special needs people have until something comes up," Agay said in a phone interview. "That complicates things."

He said he's further concerned about foster care home residents with violent histories.

"More people are getting out of prison and ending up on the streets," he said. "We're finding that some of the people have pretty violent records."

Homes can operate without a license if owners show that residents don't need 24-hour care for five or more days per week, Agay said.

Agay, Township Attorney Robert Landgraf and township Trustee Dorothy Hildebrand discussed ideas for managing the situation at last week's police committee meeting.

Hildebrand said she wondered if a rental housing ordinance might help.

Landgraf said such an ordinance has more to do with registration and inspection and not land and building use.

It's a zoning issue if a building's use is in question.

Michigan Department of Human Services statistics show there are 111 licensed adult foster care homes in Berrien County. Berrien Springs-Oronoko Township has the most at 31, Niles has 25, Benton Harbor has 13, and Buchanan has 11.

DHS spokesman Maureen Sorbet said it's up to local agencies and municipalities to handle most of the problems with unlicensed homes.

Community mental health agencies such as Riverwood in Berrien County are responsible for client well-being, she said. Municipalities can enforce building codes and perform inspections.

Alan Edlefson, Riverwood's chief executive officer, said his agency oversees people's treatment and tries to be aware of life and safety issues in group homes and facilities.

He said complaints are investigated, and his agency works with police to settle concerns. He said most residents of licensed and unlicensed homes do not have criminal backgrounds.

He said he wasn't sure why the Berrien Springs area has so many licensed homes, but he said it could be tied to where there's affordable housing.



Friday, November 16, 2007

Low-income Greenville health clinic now open

## Montcalm Area Health Center already serving patients from three counties

Jessica Dudenhofer  
Staff Writer

Friday, November 16, 2007

**GREENVILLE** - Low-cost health care is now available to local residents with the newly opened Montcalm Area Health Center.

The clinic at 306 S. Maplewood St. is a branch of Cherry Street Health Services in Grand Rapids.

Mary Jo Roelofs, a registered nurse there, said the clinic saw 35 patients on opening day and the telephone continues to ring with more interested clients.

"We're getting calls all the time," she said.

Roelofs said patients have been seen from not only Montcalm but also Ionia and Kent counties.

"It doesn't matter what county they're from," she said. "We're here for anyone who needs help."

Cherry Street Executive Director Chris Shea said that when Cherry Street Health Services was looking to expand its services outside the Grand Ra area, Greenville was only one of the locations it immediately considered.

"What we found was that there was not only more need among low-income people in Greenville, there was also more competition for physician services," he said. "On basis of need, Greenville just made more sense."

Located in the former Maplewood Health Center, the clinic offers a full range of primary medical care, similar to a doctor's office, for a minimum payment of \$15. It also accepts most health insurance plans, with fees and co-pays based on a patient's income and family size.

No health insurance is required for service, however.

"We are open to everyone, regardless of income," Shea said. "We'd like to emphasize the fact that we try to design our services to help meet the ne patients, instead of just strictly medical needs."

Clinical social worker Cheryl Tschosik is available once a week at the clinic. Shea said she has many years of experience in the field and helps man Cherry Street's social work services.

"We'll also have bilingual services," Roelofs said, explaining that some employees speak Spanish.

A dental clinic is also scheduled to open soon.

"We hope to have it open by the first of the year," Roelofs said.

The dental clinic will collaborate with the Stanton Dental clinic, which is operated by the Mid-Michigan District Health Department in Stanton bu run as a separate venture.

"Everyone qualifies for care," Shea said. "We want to be open for those who need primary care services."

The Montcalm Health Center is open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Mondays and from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays. Dr. Robert Bach of Belk staffs the clinic on Mondays while Dr. Nipa Dani of Grand Rapids staffs it every other day.

Call (616) 225-9650 for an appointment or for more information.



# THE DAILY Reporter

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## More than 1,000 food boxes to be handed out today

[Print Page](#)

By Roland Stoy-Staff Writer

A crew of 20 volunteers bagged up 13,000 pounds of potatoes, courtesy of Asama, Saturday morning at the Branch Area Food Pantry in preparation for handing out 1,100 food boxes today to the needy of Branch County.



Roland Stoy/The Reporter Lynwood Miller, left, works a table opposite Dawn Miller of the pantry staff.

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## TRIUMPHS

### Shelter helped mother of 7 go from helpless to helping

November 20, 2007

BY NAOMI R. PATTON

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

The story of Alice Little's journey out of addiction and homelessness is as long as the trip she took on three buses from her home in Detroit to her old job at a metal and stamping plant in Warren.

For years, to save time, Little dressed her youngest children in the middle of the night. She did so to make sure they were ready for school before making the daily commute to Warren.

#### Advertisement

But after working at the plant for a few years -- the only real job the recovering alcoholic and drug addict ever had -- Little was laid off in 2001.

"It was devastating," she said.

She began drinking again but stopped because she knew it "was going to lead back to drugs."

The mother of seven couldn't land another job and hung on until 2004, when the bank foreclosed on her home.

With no place to go, Little and the four youngest of her seven children lived in her van for four months. She would park on Belle Isle or at Lakewood Park "because nobody would mess with us there."

Then winter came, and she struggled to find a shelter that would accept her and the children, including a teenage son.

Little found Cass Community Social Services (CCSS), which operates Mom's Place, a shelter for women and their children.

Within the year, Little got a job working at a school cafeteria and found an apartment. She got help with overdue bills and furniture and appliances from the social services agency.

"I was off and running then," she said.

A year to the day after she first arrived at the shelter, she started working part time at CCSS.

Today, the 45-year-old is flourishing as a database clerk for CCSS Homeless Management Information System, which tracks the agency's homeless clients and the services they use.

Little's trip down the road to addiction began early. The daughter of Marv Johnson, who sang on the first album recorded by Motown founder Berry Gordy Jr., Little said she grew up around drugs.

She said she was drinking and smoking cigarettes by age 11. When she divorced her husband in 1986, the then-mother of three met a man who introduced her to heroin.

Little was consumed.

"I was prostituting to get it for him and me," she said.

She kicked the heroin habit after a year with the help of a friend, who locked her in her apartment. But free-basing cocaine soon followed.

<http://www.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?action=cpt&title=TRIUMPHS%3A+Shelter+helped+mothe...> 11/20/2007

That later gave way to smoking crack cocaine, which Little calls "an infection affecting the whole black community."

"I smoked up my check, I smoked up my food stamps," she said. "I put myself in some real stupid positions."

Ten years as an addict came to a somewhat abrupt halt in August 1996. Little was with a friend when child protective services took her friend's children away.

"This can't happen," she said, realizing the same could happen to her children.

Little sought treatment for her addiction at a Salvation Army program. But not before she bought her last rock of crack and a bottle of wine.

The Rev. Faith Fowler, CCSS executive director, said now Little "is doing a fantastic job. She's a true success story."

Little's problems are unlike that of many of CCSS's clients, Fowler said. The grandmother of eight, who once dreamed of being a nurse, said she knows this too well.

"I have empathy ... I've been there," Little said.

Contact **NAOMI R. PATTON** at 313-223-4485 or [npatton@freepress.com](mailto:npatton@freepress.com).

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## CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

### GIFT SUBSCRIPTIONS

3:01 am, November 19, 2007

## State expected to lose 76,000 jobs

By [Sheena Harrison](#)

Michigan is expected to lose about 76,000 jobs through the end of this year and lose 51,000 more in 2008, say **University of Michigan** economists.

In an annual forecast of the state's economy, UM economists Joan Crary, George Fulton and Saul Hymans also said Michigan will lose about 24,000 manufacturing jobs this year, 25,000 in 2008 and about 10,000 in 2009.

But there is a small bright spot — the economists project the state will see a net gain of 15,000 jobs in 2009, coming mostly from a stabilized auto industry and a turnaround in the housing market.

Growth in sectors such as construction, services, education and health care also will help with some of the projected job creation in 2009.

In a statement Friday, Crary said there's reason to be optimistic about Michigan's economy despite some gloomy projections.

"Recently released data show that, alongside the losses, the state's economy consistently produces a very large number of job gains," Crary said. "There must be some vitality in an economy that can continue creating jobs even though it's not keeping pace with the leakage.

"If the leaks can be plugged, the state's economy and labor market have the capacity to grow and prosper. And therein lies both our challenge and our opportunity."

The state has lost about 400,000 jobs since 2000 — about 70 percent of which come from the manufacturing sector, according to the UM report.

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## Charities need help for the holidays

### Organizations say they're serving twice as many people this year.

By Kaniqua Daniel Smothers  
Journal Register News Service

The face of Oakland County's less fortunate population no longer resembles poverty-stricken, single parents living on minimum wage.

As emergency assistance organizations, such as the Lighthouse of Oakland County and the Salvation Army, prepare food baskets for the holiday season, most say the influx of residents in need has nearly doubled since last year and those requesting help aren't "your average needy person."

"It's not just the poor anymore," said Laura Covintree, chief development officer with Lighthouse. "It's a totally different population we're dealing with now. These are whitecollar folks who are unable to make ends meet. What's really sad is this is the first time they've had to look for assistance. And usually, by the time they get to us, it's almost too late."

Covintree said on any given day, "the lines are out the door with people looking to receive emergency goods," which means the pantry shelves are becoming bare.

"Now with the holidays coming up, we don't have much to give," she said.

#### Preparing for Thanksgiving

The Lighthouse is prepared to feed about 4,500 residents this Thanksgiving. Each registered family will receive a turkey, stuffing, vegetables, bread, sweet potatoes, gravy, pumpkin pie and many of the other trimmings that accompany Thanksgiving dinner.

The Royal Oak Salvation Army plans to feed about 500 families, which is equivalent to thousands of residents individually, said Maj. Glen Caddy, Salvation Army core officer and pastor.

"Five hundred is usually what we budget for during Thanksgiving," he said. "Some years - like now - there's more people in need. But we have to cut it off because we don't have enough food."

Gleaners Community Food Bank distributes to partner agencies including the Lighthouse, Open Arms Food Pantry, the Baldwin Center and multiple Salvation Army locations throughout southeastern Michigan.

"Last year, we provided 1.8 million pounds of food during the month of November," said John Kastler, information system specialist for Gleaners Oakland Distribution Center in Pontiac. "We anticipate this year we'll exceed 2 million pounds easily because the economy is so bad. So that means we're looking at an increase in the millions of pounds of food that we provide, which is a challenge for us because we're constantly struggling to keep our inventory stocked with products to service the community."

#### Increase in overall need

Not just during the holiday season, but throughout the year, area assistance agencies are seeing a marked increase in residents seeking help on a regular basis for food, bill payments and clothing.

Caddy said the Salvation Army has seen about a 65 percent increase from last year - primarily for rental and mortgage payment assistance.

"What's happening is we're getting people who have never come to an agency like this before for help," he said. "It's a spin-off of the major economic downfall. A lot of these are people who have always provided for themselves, they planned for rainy days and now those rainy day funds are gone."

Covintree said she's noticing the people who formerly

See CHARITIES, Page 4A

came to Lighthouse for assistance about once every three months are now coming in every month.

"After we get through Thanksgiving, we usually start to focus on collecting toys for Christmas," she said. "But now people are requesting more basic needs. They're not even asking for toys for their kids. They're asking for school clothes, boots, winter coats. We're seeing a lot of desperation. Families are just having a hard time making ends meet."

Unemployment rate increasing

According to the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth, Michigan's unemployment rate has increased to 7.7 percent as of October -- the highest in the nation.

This increase also marks the highest unemployment rate for Michigan since late 1992. Michigan has had the nation's highest seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for several months.

State officials say the higher jobless rate this month reflects short-term layoffs in the auto industry. The national unemployment rate in October was 4.7 percent.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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## Toys for Tots prepares for holiday donations, giving

By DIANA DILLABER MURRAY  
Of The Oakland Press

Parents and guardians of children up to 12 years old in low-income families are being invited to sign up for holiday toys through the annual U.S. Marines Toys for Tots program.

Older children who have disabilities that can be documented are also eligible to receive the toys that are being donated at drop-off sites around Oakland County.

Applications can be made from 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Nov. 27, 28, 29 and 30 and Dec. 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 at the new Toys for Tots distribution center at 1999 Centerpoint Parkway, which is off South Boulevard at the first traffic light west of Opdyke Road in Pontiac.

The three-story white building is owned by General Motors Corp.

Gloria Carlisle, longtime regional coordinator for the North Oakland Toys for Tots program, said she is grateful this holiday season to GM, the United Auto Workers union and state Rep. Tim Melton and his assistant Sam Scott for their efforts to provide the new temporary seasonal home.

Parents, grandparents and guardians should bring their photo identification, Social Security cards for themselves and their children, the children's birth certificates and proof of income.

Once their application is accepted, volunteers will schedule an appointment to pick up the gifts. Families already receiving toys from other agencies cannot sign up.

Bathroom facilities are not open to the public, and food and beverages are not permitted in the building.

To donate toys at the distribution center, people can call (313) 363-4021 beginning Nov. 27.

Or they can donate items at drop-off sites that include Applebee's, 2553 Elizabeth Lake Road, Waterford Township; Gardner-White Furniture; 4945 Dixie Highway, Waterford; Art Van, 5053 Dixie Highway, Waterford; Jasso Tree Service, 637 Brown Road, Orion Township; Popeyes and Red Lobster near Summit Place mall, Waterford; Toys R Us at Oakland Pointe in Pontiac; Great Lakes Athletic Club, 3800 Baldwin Road, Orion Township; ABC Harley-Davidson, 4405 Highland, Waterford; The Breakfast Club at Ram's Horn, 1990 S. Rochester Road, Rochester Hills; and Bloomfield Ace Hardware, 6650 Telegraph Road, Bloomfield Hills.

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Print Page

Part-time Legislature? Or end term limits?

By JOHN EBY / Dowagiac Daily News  
Monday, November 19, 2007 10:17 AM EST

CASSOPOLIS - Instead of favoring a part-time Legislature, Sen. Ron Jelinek's spokesman told Cass County Commissioner Bill Steele, D-Calvin Township, Nov. 15, changing 1992 term limits might be preferable.

If lawmakers have less time for "dilly-dallying around," Steele said, "maybe we can save some money."

"Term limits beget eternal partisanship that has roadblocked itself," Chris Siebenmark said. "You've got to be very careful when you look at a part-time Legislature. If you bring that down, you're going to have part-time effort as well. I'm not saying don't do it - the people of Michigan can do what they want - but realize inside of that your constituent service will suffer greatly."

"There are a lot of calls we get for child support, for Medicaid, for a lot of things because, quite frankly, they don't know where to go so they call their legislative office," Siebenmark said. "Staffs will be gone. My position is out of here, and I wouldn't do it to save myself, I'm just explaining that a lot of things you're accustomed to seeing and having helped would be gone."

"It seems to work in other states and it seems to save money," Steele replied. "If it makes them concentrate, quit wasting time and quit wasting our money, I'm all for it."

"I wouldn't tell you how to vote, and I'm not going to stand here and hold a debate on it, but I would say the best thing to do, though, is get rid of term limits," Siebenmark said.

"With regard to the state budget, which was adopted in the middle of the night," County Administrator Terry Proctor said, "three of four issues are good for Cass County. One is not. Once the 83 counties use up their revenue sharing reserve funds, what's going to happen? The first to face that is Tuscola County. The Legislature funded that in the 2008 budget, so that sets a good precedent for the next round of counties. Privatization of foster care is a real issue on this side of the state, where we've had very good service from the Department of Human Services. Some legislators have tried to shove privatization of foster care statewide. Our Judge (Susan) Dobrich has been very much opposed to that, as have the judges in Berrien and Van Buren counties. The good news is that has not been included in the budget. Also, we've been concerned about county child support enforcement, which has been fully funded in the budget.

"The negative is that the court equity fund has been reduced statewide \$900,000," Proctor said. "Each county gets part of the distribution of that, including Cass County, to help offset the cost of operating the courts. It doesn't fully, but it helps and, unfortunately, that has been reduced."

In another area, Michigan's unemployment rate climbed to 7.7 percent in October - highest in 15 years and two-tenths of a percentage point higher than September's rate.

The national October jobless rate was unchanged over the month at 4.7 percent.

Since October 2006, about 75,000 Michigan residents have dropped out of the state workforce.

The October unemployment rate increase reflects short-term layoffs in the auto industry.

"We're still going the other direction," Siebenmark said. "Some of it is seasonal, but there are some legitimate losses inside of there, too. What's really becoming scary is the overall number of workers is shrinking."

Asked about the Jan. 15 presidential primary by Dowagiac Commissioner John Cureton, "My guess is no," Siebenmark said. "It would really put clerks under the gun. The last couple of weeks they could have been distributing papers and getting things up to speed, but they've been in a holding pattern. It may not be so much a question of legality as practicality."



Commissioner Debbie Johnson asked Siebenmark about alternatives to the new services tax, such as "one- or two-percent for everybody instead of just targeting certain businesses."

"Ron voted to support it based on what came out of conference committee. Keep in mind, legislation that comes out of conference cannot be modified at the chamber level. It's strictly a yea or nay vote. No amendments. No changes. It's probably going to happen now as some sort of surcharge to the Michigan Business Tax. Quite frankly, there was an opportunity to get away from this mess altogether. There was a plan floated four to six weeks before the Oct. 1 deadline to raise the income tax for three months - October, November and December. Put it on the (Nov. 6) ballot to raise sales tax from six to seven percent. That probably would have passed with the understanding income tax would have gone back down to 3.9. The Senate was ready to go. That was the day the Senate actually, enmasse, went over to the House and the Speaker threw them out. He wouldn't do it, so they paralyzed themselves. I think in the end what's going to happen - my crystal ball, for what it's worth - is you're going to see a ballot proposal to increase sales tax in '08. I see it passing and I see some sort of income tax reduction as well. In the end, unfortunately, we're probably going to end up with the animal we should have had in the first place, after about a year," Siebenmark said.

Commissioner Ed Goodman, D-Silver Creek Township, reported that the Earned Income Tax Credit effort at Cass District Library, which returned \$550,000 to the community, is down to two volunteers.

"The reason why they don't have any more volunteers is because everybody they trained now works for the IRS," Goodman said. "If you want some free training in doing taxes, this is a great opportunity and maybe you'll start a new career. I have also been informed that if you need a flu vaccination, on Nov. 29 between 3 and 7 p.m. at the Donald Lyons Health Center in Dowagiac, they have like a thousand left for \$25."

Vice Chairman Ron Francis, R-Cassopolis, reported that Cass District Library has reviewed expansion plans for the Edwardsburg branch and in the coming year "will be focused on how to fund it. It will require public input and seeking grants."

"Several of us toured the Delta GM plant between Charlotte and Lansing," Commissioner Gordon Bickel Sr., R-Constantine, reported. "Employment is 3,000 plus, but there are robots everywhere."

"They were so concerned when we toured the plant about the paint finish on the vehicles," added Commissioner Robert Ziliak, R-Niles, "we had to wear ring guards and belt guards so we wouldn't scratch any. They're building 1,600 (Buick) Enclaves a day."

Prior to the meeting, Clerk-Register Barb Wilson hosted commissioners at an open house in her office at the 1899 courthouse to see the register automation project.

Commissioners met on Saturday morning, Nov. 3, at the Edward Lowe Foundation's Billieville conference center in Penn Township for a workshop.

"We showed what the new county Web site is going to look like when it's launched," County Administrator Terry Proctor said. "There's some content for each county commissioner to put up about themselves."